

The Semaphore

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THE
CIRCUS
IS COMING!





FROM THE EDITOR

by Cap Caplan
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Two well-traveled circus people are coming home. But they aren't coming alone. They're bringing the circus with them.

Starting next month, a new contemporary circus production opens in San Francisco, taking up residence at the historic Club Fugazi, the home of our beloved theatrical extravaganza, "Beach Blanket Babylon."

Those travelers, Bay Area natives both, Gypsy Snider and Shana Carroll, are the renowned creators and co-collaborators of "Dear San Francisco: A High-Flying Love Story," which they describe as an "intimate and immersive production."

I had the good fortune of speaking with Gypsy about her career, the evolution of contemporary circus, and the 7 Fingers theatrical circus company responsible for this show.

Snider's early start as a performer—she was four—is not surprising, when one learns she is the daughter of Peggy Snider and Larry Pisoni, founders of the famed Pickle Family Circus.

The Pickle Family Circus opened in 1974, offering a "theatrical revolution" to traditional circus programming—at which tigers and elephants were not merely unshackled but completely absent, replaced by clowns and jugglers and other performers conveying a social message in story form. The messaging was subtle; throwing a "pie in the face" was a reference against authority.

The spirit of the Pickle Family Circus was also different, its structure operating in an egalitarian and collaborative way, dividing roles, responsibilities, and earnings equitably. It collaborated with local nonprofit organizations as it toured from southern California to Alaska, bringing attention to its enterprise and needed revenues to its partners.

The origins of the Pickle Family Circus can be traced most directly to the San Francisco Mime Troupe, its objectives focused on issues of social and economic injustice using an "everyman perspective" to oppose racism, war, and corporate greed. (The Troupe continues to bring its theatrical performances to Bay Area audiences, even during the pandemic restrictions via "radio play podcast.")

And the SF Mime Troupe itself brings the legacy of "guerrilla" messaging or "guerrilla theater" in its cleverly choreographed calls for social action, though the guerilla movement certainly has not been subtle in its methods.

Many of us became acutely aware of guerilla tactics watching and reading about the actions of the Aids

CLUB FUGAZI IS BACK!



© ALEXANDRE GALLIEZ

Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). With a coterie of desperate men dying of AIDS and unable to get support from the federal government, the group started to use direct action and political theater (the famous infiltration of the New York Stock Exchange to protest the price of AZT, the only approved but unaffordable drug to treat the disease) to heighten awareness of the issue.

In the same city, a group of women artists, the "guerilla girls," called attention to the lack of gender and racial equality in the art world, naming themselves after deceased and often forgotten women artists, wearing guerrilla masks to protect their anonymity and protest the anonymity of their forebears. The "guerilla girls" are active today, via productions, billboards, and social media, asking provocative questions like "Are there more naked women than women artists in art museums?" that invite the public to "Visit Your Favorite Museum, Count 'em Up & Let the Guerrilla Girls Know!"

The Pickle Family Circus and the San Francisco Mime Troupe, as well as the Big Apple Circus and, later, Cirque du Soleil, exemplify the "New Circus" movement (European style) characterized by a one-ring structure, which brings performers and the audience closer together, facilitating interaction as the

action—and story—unfolds.

The circus and arts company responsible for the show, 7 Fingers, was created in 2002 by seven circus artists—Snider and Carroll are two of the founding members—to redefine circus by stripping it down to its exhilarating quintessence.

As its website proclaims, 7 Fingers "tells stories using death-defying acrobatics with a life-affirming theatricality." The modern circus collective creates different kinds of works—individually and collectively—that "bring out the challenges of living, the joys and the issues."

Not to be overlooked is award-winning collaborator Shana Carroll, also delighted to be returning to her roots. If you followed noted journalist Jon Carroll's column in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, you read about the experiences of his trapeze artist and Pickle Family alum daughter.

"Dear San Francisco..." indeed. What a wonderful post-pandemic joy this new theatrical entertainment will bring.

Gypsy and Shana, welcome home!



Ticket information can be found in an advertisement elsewhere in this issue.



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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

by Al Fontes
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Well, that wasn't much fun. For the first time in my life, everybody, absolutely everybody, went through the same joy-killing experience that fundamentally changed their daily existence. No matter whom you might meet, no matter with whom you speak, they can tell you stories about hoarding toilet paper, paying too much for hand sanitizer, buying masks, and wrangling an appointment to get vaccinated. "Zoom," once a term for moving fast, now implies sitting stationary on one's keister, talking to little animated faces on a screen.

We're finally coming out of a time of great loss, where so much of that loss has been exceptionally private and so very quiet. As we recover from our trauma, we reconnect with people whom we haven't seen in over a year, and who could be hurting more than we realize. We might find ourselves re-learning how to talk to one another. We might be surprised at the magnitude of our own hurt or the slowness with which people begin to feel whole again.

As we face this process, a close-knit community like ours is ever more precious. In and around our neighborhood, people have worn masks and practiced social distancing. We've done it not just for ourselves but for the well-being of those around us. We've decided, "This isn't just about me." For that, we can give each other a hug and a high-five. Now we must continue to work together, to take care of one another, to take care of ourselves.

We face historic challenges and opportunities, and our neighborhood has come to play an outsized role in demonstrating how businesses and people can adapt. The transformation our streets have experienced could happen only in a crisis. Based on my admittedly limited travel, I believe our neighborhood has responded as well as any other in San Francisco, if not better. Going

forward, our obligation is to take hold of that transformation, keep what works, and discard what doesn't.

Members of THD can become involved in this healing. You can help out with our Social & Program Committee, as it organizes events open to all and brings folks together. You might want to get involved with Art & Culture, so that we can support our local artists and share the artistic beauty that helps to make us whole. Join the Communications Committee, so that you can help THD get its message out to the online community. Help Planning & Zoning in its quest to keep our streets beautiful and livable in this time of transition. If you're interested, send me an email at President@THD.org or fill out the form at <https://thd.org/member-info>.

I find myself both proud and grateful that San Francisco, at the time of this writing, continues to respond intelligently and thoughtfully to the pandemic. Science reveals truth. Science works. Our vaccination rate bestows upon us the promise of a relatively normal life. We walk the streets without masks today because we wore them yesterday. Bearing a phoenix with outstretched wings, our city flag proclaims a community that once rose from widespread, painful devastation.

Who's saying all of this? I'm THD's new President, elected in April of this year. I've been a member of THD for more than 20 years and have lived on Telegraph Hill since 1994. I worked developing software starting in 1987 and retired four years ago, after a 30-year career at 13 different companies, including Autodesk, Comcast, and Google.

I was born in San Francisco, but when I was a baby, my family moved to Marin, where I grew up and stayed until 1992. Having fallen in love with city life, I moved to the Inner Richmond, and before long, I discovered North Beach and decided to make it my home.

I learned that my San Francisco roots reach back to Cow Hollow, where my father was grandson to immigrants from Portugal and Scotland. His father, "Smokey," was a bookie, taking bets on horses and running a numbers racket up and down the Marina.

Both my mother's parents were part of the wave of Italian immigrants who arrived in North Beach prior to World War II. There they met, fell in love, and married at Sts. Peter and Paul Church. My grandfather, having escaped Benito Mussolini's draft, worked painting

ships at the piers on our local waterfront. After the war, he established an auto body shop with his brother on Larkin Street, a block away from the cable car tracks. He hated the cable cars.

My mother lived her early childhood on Kearny Street near Green Street, around the corner from my current home. She attended Catholic grammar school, notably sharing a classroom with Paul Pelosi, who later married an ambitious woman named 'Nancy.'

Indeed, California has never had a shortage of eager politicians. Lately, one of the more eager beavers has been our own State Senator Scott Wiener. As you might know, the senator has made a habit of pushing state legislation to override local zoning laws that he doesn't like.

Consider SB 35, the so-called "density bonus" law, used continuously by developers who find San Francisco's planning code to be inconvenient. And for those who don't like the little guy getting in the way of the big guy, we've seen an ongoing series of legislative attacks on CEQA, the California Environmental Quality Act.

Our system of democracy relies on the consent of the governed, expressed largely through elections. It follows that local zoning policy is best made by those who must live with its effects. But San Francisco keeps making decisions that aren't to the liking of Senator Wiener and Assemblyman David Chiu. Their response? Pass state laws that disempower you and me by sweeping away local control. For some reason, they think a set of detailed and arcane zoning standards should apply monolithically to all of California, a state that has more people than the entire country of Canada.

The most recent attacks on local democracy are SB 9 and SB 10. Although SB 9 is bad enough, one provision in SB 10 is particularly egregious. It allows local city councils (in our case the Board of Supervisors) to override decisions made through the voter initiative process. In a city like San Francisco, where the government does not always achieve high moral and ethical standards, it's especially crucial for the voters to have the power to band together and stop shady decisions. But with SB 10 in place, the Board of Supervisors will be able to throw your vote away. And that's the way Scott Wiener wants it.

Neighborhood Slowly Returns to Life: A Photo Essay (See Page 13.)



The return of the shared experience of film. © DENNIS HEARNE

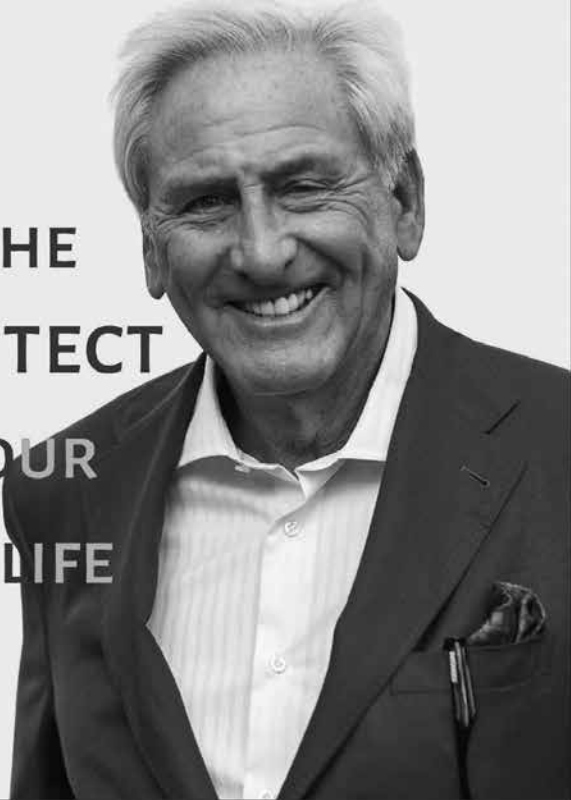
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PETER L. DWARES



ART & CULTURE REPORT

by Romalyn Schmaltz, Committee Chair
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When I agreed to take over as the coordinator and programmer of North Beach First Fridays at the beginning of 2020, neither I nor anyone else knew what was about to befall us all. Already, the coronavirus pandemic has been penned about more than any event in my lifetime, and, at this point, I have nothing new to add to the tales of our forever-altered vista—except that, at least in North Beach, the art seldom stopped sweeping itself into our streets.

One miracle was that Elizabeth Ashcroft took over Live Worms on Grant Avenue—long our flagship modernist gallery—and turned it into a true community space. Sure, for a while, only a few masked patrons could enter at once, starting last August, when things began gingerly to open up a bit. Beth has been a vanguard of the North Beach art scene since long before I arrived here 15 years ago, and through her expertise and generosity, she provided a sort of art anchor for us at 1345 Grant Avenue. Beth always enthusiastically supports and participates in North Beach First Fridays and hosts both established local artists and gives emerging artists their first break. (And, trust me, you never forget your first art show!) It was so fun, for example, to see Vesuvio bar manager Joanna Lioce sell 10 of her first paintings at Live Worms.

Another boon was the arrival of Foreign Lens Gallery at 508 Green Street. Owned and operated by Tibor Szabo, who has taken over the old 101 Music space and turned it into an event heaven, Foreign Lens offers art exhibitions (such as the fantastic Ann Cohen Paradise Lounge exhibit up for several months this spring) alongside myriad eclectic events and musical productions, some of which are also part of North Beach First Fridays.

Veteran San Francisco/North Beach painter Thomasina DeMaio (about whom I wrote extensively in the Winter 2021 issue of *The Semaphore*) and I teamed up with Ida Zoubi, owner of the Caffè Trieste, to begin producing outdoor pop-up art exhibitions outside the Caffè, where we typically show 15 to 20 artists each month in a very fun, funky, DIY environment.

The Jessica Loos Poetry Series at Macchiarini Creative Design has become a highly popular fixture of the First Fridays events as well, offering four to six acclaimed poets every month. Typically, Danny Macchiarini projects images related to an historical storytelling moment before or following the poetry, which is always as educational as it is entertaining.

City Lights Books has also teamed up with Vesuvio Café to offer a variety of live readings and performances every First Friday. What an honor to have such storied establishments and literati on our team!

101 Music on Grant, the freewheeling boutique, and Church Key have been sharing their parcel with us to host a wide variety of musical acts, from singer-songwriters to four-piece jazz ensembles to DJs. In August, we'll be featuring a guest musician from Minneapolis who has written almost a whole album's worth of songs about North Beach (which he calls 'Northberry,' because it's a lot like our Mayberry)! We are now fea-

ART IN THE TIME OF CORONA



Dancing in the Streets.

© DENNIS HEARNE

turing three sets of music every First Friday!

And we got Club Fugazi back! In June, we celebrated the arrival of the 7 Fingers Circus with a very lively circus theme, offering tours from Fugazi to the other events in North Beach as given by tour guide wizard Blandina Farley and her assistant, Ashley Rhea. These tours are also now part of the permanent fixture of North Beach First Fridays. They will usually be meeting at Caffè Trieste, so come enjoy your complimentary tour next time!

And those are just some of our regular features! But everyone—every neighbor, visitor, business, and artist—is welcome and invited to participate actively. There's truly a niche for anyone who wants to get involved. And that's been the best thing about this last year. I was recently on the phone with the San Francisco Arts Commission, an organization partially supporting us. When the Commission thanked us for figuring out how to keep art alive in our neighborhood when almost no one else was able to, I had to counter and say *No—Thank you!* Thank you for giving me a *raison d'être* amid all the endless uncertainty! Thank you for giving me the ability to hand a musician a check in a year where there were almost no live gigs and no money. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to showcase people's artwork. Thank you for giving my friends and neighbors something to look forward to and plan for.

These sentiments are also the kinds of things folks have been saying to me, so I'm just forwarding the feelings. We only stopped in December and January, and we'll keep on going. North Beach really knows how to keep the art alive, and I've never felt more connected to my community, even in a year where I barely saw anyone's face. Which is to say, it sure feels good to see all your faces, and I hope to see them all at the next First Friday.



Veteran punk publisher Val Vale offers decades of underground documentation at the pop-up salon outside Caffè Trieste.

© ROMALYN SCHMALTZ



DJs Tangerine Meadows and Trippy Chris and friends get the dance party started outside 101 Music Freewheeling Church Key.

© ROMALYN SCHMALTZ



Longtime THD member Richelle Slota and Thomasina DeMaio enjoy the faux fur coat June weather outside Caffè Trieste.

© ROMALYN SCHMALTZ



DISTRICT 3 SUPERVISOR REPORT

by Supervisor Aaron Peskin
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The City has been grappling with safely reopening and finalizing a budget package that prioritizes equitable investments in communities hardest hit by COVID-19 as well as incentivizes an economic and tourism recovery. By the time you read this, the Board of Supervisors will have adopted a budget with some significant wins for every neighborhood and sector, including the following investments on which my office has been hard at work.

Chinatown Recovery Package

Chinatown is the cultural and economic hub of San Francisco's Chinese community and was the first neighborhood to be adversely impacted by the pandemic. A devastating halt to tourism, barriers to small business and rent relief, and a wave of anti-Asian sentiment including violent attacks all contributed to an extraordinarily challenging 18 months for the community.

Led by the organizing efforts of Chinatown small business and civic leaders and with the support of Mayor London Breed and Supervisors Connie Chan and Eric Mar in particular, we were able to secure historic investments in dedicated street cleaning operations in Chinatown, a \$1 million Chinatown small business relief fund, and operating subsidies to move Chinatown SRO families and seniors into permanently affordable housing units, citywide. We were also able to set aside funding specifically for tourism recovery, City College enrollment incentives, and an exciting line-up of arts and culture programming, including bringing the Bruce Lee exhibit to Chinatown.

Finally, our investment last year into a new culturally competent, community-led public safety and victim services program was continued this year with additional funding for legal resources. Thanks to those of you who have consistently patronized Chinatown businesses throughout the pandemic and supported everything from our food pantry organizing to senior and Distance Learning Hub programming!

Addressing Homelessness Citywide

In addition to opening hundreds of new units of permanent supportive housing in District 3 for formerly homeless individuals and a new Navigation

RECORD INVESTMENTS IN RECOVERY AND REBUILDING

Center (fully occupied soon, pending updated CDC COVID-19 guidelines), we have secured funding for direct support services, workforce development, and housing referrals, specifically for individuals experiencing homelessness in the North Beach and Barbary Coast neighborhoods. The first Street Crisis Response Team (SCRT), deployed from SFFD Station 49 to North Beach, Fisherman's Wharf, and Chinatown back in May, consisted of one bilingual community paramedic, one DPH behavioral health clinician, and one behavioral health peer specialist. Although we piloted SCRT first in District 3, we were able to fund five more teams to provide clinical interventions to street crises citywide. We also saw record investments in safe transitional housing for women in crisis.

Serving Up Small Business Support

In partnership with the Port of San Francisco and the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, we have developed a permitting program, including bilingual outreach and education, for sidewalk vendors to curb the unlawful proliferation of vending in Fisherman's Wharf. In addition to funding for new community ambassadors to spearhead tourism programming with the Fisherman's Wharf Community Benefits District, we have created an "Equitable Rent Credit" program to attract a diversity of new local commercial tenants to Fisherman's Wharf, with an emphasis on helping Black entrepreneurs identify affordable lease opportunities at public tourist destinations on the waterfront. Also look for new free educational museum programming on the Wharf!

We're excited to announce the return of the wildly successful NoodleFest, a community collaboration bringing you the cross-cultural culinary offerings of local North Beach and Chinatown restaurants. Thanks also to Calvin Yan in my Office for helping to relocate the North Beach Farmers Market to a more spacious location in time for the City's reopening. Finally, a huge thank you to the Telegraph Hill Dwellers and the North Beach Business Association for their continued work to expand the North Beach First Fridays art walk. We advocated for funding to help with permitting, outreach, and artist recruitment in the last budget cycle, and the community managed to pull together some of the best outdoor activities for neighbors wanting to

experience arts and culture and support small businesses during the pandemic.

I'm also proud that our office has nominated the largest number of Legacy Businesses in the entire city, helping create incentives for landlords to enter into long-term affordable lease agreements with beloved small businesses. In this budget cycle, the Board of Supervisors approved \$3 million to continue the popular program and ramp up staffing and application processing. In the last six months, we've added Sam Wo Restaurant, Sam's Burgers, San Sun, ABS Seafood, and the Old Ship Saloon to the Registry, with Il Pollaio, Far East Cafe, Biordi Art Imports, Dee Dee Boutique, Shanghai Kelly's Saloon, and Helmand Palace all set to have hearings soon. Thank you for your support of these family businesses over the years!

Public Safety Updates

The City has invested in funding to ensure that the SFPD's Department of Justice reforms are fully implemented, including modernizing their investigations and reporting database. Central Station (joined by Sunny Angulo from my Office) bid farewell to the legendary Officer Mark Alvarez, Star #2189, after 31 years of service to the SF Police Department, 25 of them as a footbeat officer at Central Station, where he is largely recognized as the model for community policing.

My Office also worked with the Lower Polk and Tenderloin Community Benefit Districts to expand a "Community Safety Ambassador" program into the Lower Polk alleyways, with special public health training. Finally, we are extending the successful "Safe Passage" program to Lower Polk in order to create safe walking paths for families going to and from Redding Elementary School.

A Note of Gratitude

Normally, I save reflections on gratitude to the community for an end-of-the-year review, as we look back on the work we've accomplished together. This has certainly been a year and a half like no other, and no one deserves more credit for getting us through this period together than all of you. I've worked harder during the past year and a half than I think I have in my entire career, including the period when I was President of the Board of Supervisors. That being said, I've had my share of struggles. And many of you have reached out, in big and small ways, to share your support, friendship, and love. I want to say thank you—once again, you have reminded me why I love this job. I'm lucky to get to represent the very best of San Francisco.

See you in the neighborhood,
Aaron



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PARKS & TREES REPORT

by Don Raichle, Committee Chair
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Over the years, this column has provided updates on the condition of our parks, urban forest, and open spaces. It has focused on identifying both problems and progress made by San Francisco while also noting that we, as a neighborhood, need to stay involved and hold city agencies accountable to ensure the “right thing” happens, relative to improvements and maintenance of our urban landscape. It’s an easy assumption that Recreation and Parks and Public Works (the primary departments that deal with our open spaces) are too big and bureaucratic to be responsive to local needs. The reality is that these agencies have come through on a number of initiatives over the last several years that made the neighborhood better. Despite their size, budget constraints, and often byzantine policies that slow things to a crawl, city agencies have key people who work hard to get something accomplished.

That said, much of the credit for local improvements goes to local businesses and residents. While some projects have been generated internally within the departments, most of those providing the greatest return to the neighborhood have been instigated by residents who identified a need or concern and then acted on it. When it could play a role, THD has joined with other stakeholders and representatives, including Supervisor Aaron Peskin, to help amplify neighborhood requests. There have been countless frustrating moments along the way, but, in the end, there have been a surprising number of successes. What follows are a list of projects that were initiated by, or made better, due to the efforts of your neighbors. Most of these activities have been noted in this column before but are highlighted here since, in every case, individuals getting involved made a difference.

Washington Square Drainage and Irrigation Project: Friends of Washington Square was the initiator, and, from the beginning, its involvement, along with participation by THD, North Beach Neighbors, and other local stakeholders, was essential in setting parameters to shorten the construction period, provide for future maintenance, and keep the contractor and agencies accountable. There were some big mistakes along the way, including damaged trees, initial drainage performance problems, and slow establishment of the lawn. In all cases, local stakeholder oversight was critical in getting problems addressed and the park open on time.

Washington Square Playground: Recreation and Parks started the project and had several major setbacks during implementation, including the unnecessary destruction of a grove of mature pine trees. That incident, due to poor construction practices, compromised the final quality of the completed playground. It should be noted that it was residents who first noted

SHOWING UP PAYS OFF



Magnolias planted to replace ficus trees. © DON RAICHLE

the damage and then insisted on a significant new planting of trees and stepped-up quality control. In the end, it is reasonable to assume that local involvement in oversight and participation in the design process kept the project from really going off the rails.

Planting of Trees on Columbus: Columbus Avenue has slowly been losing its tree canopy. As trees died from disease or damage, they weren’t replaced, leaving the sidewalks full of trunks or empty tree planters. In 2019, a group of Ficus trees was slated for removal, but instead of just letting that happen with no commitment for timely replanting, past THD president Judy Irving and other local residents pushed back with an appeal of DPW’s decision. In the end, three trees were lost due to legitimate safety concerns. However, Judy and her team were able to negotiate immediate replacement of the Ficus plus additional replacements for long-missing trees along Columbus, in the park itself, and in other streets near the park.

Pioneer Park Tree Maintenance: Maintenance at Pioneer Park has been neglected for years. The result: a thicket of unhealthy trees, potential safety hazards, and blocked views to the Bay. After pressure from residents, Recreation and Parks finally began a thinning and pruning program to address the problem. The near-term result is a much healthier urban forest and an opening of Bay views that haven’t been seen for decades. The need for public involvement, however, is still not finished. While the remaining trees are healthier, the follow-up revegetation of the slopes has not been completed. Revegetation is critical to provide vegetative cover and erosion control on the north slope of the hill and to create the lost privacy screening for



Water bag awaiting refill. © DON RAICHLE

the adjacent residences.

Street Tree Maintenance: While not as big as those for Washington Square or Pioneer Park, the lack of local follow-up tree maintenance was what inspired this article. Thanks to observations by one of your neighbors, who noticed that many of the recently-planted trees were looking stressed, closer inspection revealed they weren’t being watered. As it turns out, this individual’s bringing the issue to the attention of Public Works led to the discovery of an internal quality control problem. It took some time to get the problem addressed, but progress happened, thanks to someone paying attention.

A common thread running through these projects is that a better result was achieved primarily because of involvement of local residents. In most cases, the completed project or action was positive for the neighborhood, but if individuals, local neighborhood groups like THD, and/or a responsive Supervisor had not raised their voices, advocating and participating, these projects might not have happened at all or would have had negative impacts on the quality of our parks and open space. It should be noted that these projects still have outstanding issues that need to be addressed, so vigilance is still required to make sure remaining work gets done and executed properly. In the end, getting involved does make a difference, and constant follow-up and oversight of work done are essential.

A big thank you to all of you who continue to play a role in making Telegraph Hill and North Beach better.



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PLANNING & ZONING REPORT

by Nancy Shanahan, Stan Hayes, and Mary Lipian,
Committee Co-Chairs
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The Planning & Zoning Committee continues to be busy. Here are some of our recent activities.

Project Tracking System. We've instituted a new spreadsheet-based project tracking system. Currently, we're tracking the updated status of 21 different proposed projects in Telegraph Hill, North Beach, and the Northeast Waterfront. We're actively engaged in review and comment for all of these projects.

State Density Bonus Program Article. As you might recall from the last *Semaphore* issue, we wrote an article analyzing the effect of the State Density Bonus (SDB) program on North Beach. It's caused a stir. If you missed the article or would like to read it again, you can find it on THD's website at thd.org/bonus. The SDB program has been widely promoted as producing more below-market-rate (BMR) housing. To test that theory, we analyzed four large building projects proposed in North Beach. We found that the SDB program would actually result in fewer, or at best the same or only marginally more, BMR units than the City's already-existing Inclusionary Housing Program. In return, project developers could build significantly more market-rate units and, at the same time, receive concessions and waivers that would override long-standing City development standards (e.g., height limits, exposure requirements, building massing standards). Contrary to promoter claims, the SDB program is much more about producing more market-rate units (and developer profits) than it is about producing more affordable housing.

P&Z Committee Meeting. We held a P&Z

Committee meeting on June 22 at which we discussed and evaluated two proposed large-scale projects:

- **425 Broadway.** The project developer presented a slightly updated design of a proposed 65-foot, 7-story, 41-unit residential/office two-building complex that would replace a parking lot on the south side of Broadway. Details are in the State Density Bonus article on THD's website.
- **955 Sansome.** The Committee discussed a proposed 84-foot, 8-story, mixed use building (24 residential units, plus 3 stories of office use) that would replace a two-story garage at the corner of Sansome and Vallejo. Because the developer declined our invitation to attend, the Committee evaluated the project without the developer present.

SB 37 resolution. The THD board discussed, and unanimously approved, a motion expressing THD's support for SB 37, the Contaminated Site Cleanup and Safety Act introduced by Senator Dave Cortese. The bill will make it explicit that so-called "common-sense" exemptions cannot be used to waive California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review of sites on the Cortese List, an inventory of contaminated sites located throughout the state. Such "common-sense" exemptions have been used repeatedly by SF Planning to exempt sites on the Cortese List in San Francisco from CEQA review.

Planning Commission rules amendments. THD attended multiple continued hearings and, one hopes, by the time of this issue's publication will have testified in opposition to amendments to the Planning Commission's rules and regulations regarding Discretionary Review (DR). As stated by the Planning Department, "The Planning Commission has discretion over all building permit applications. Normally, this discretion is delegated to the Planning

Department...As part of their discretionary powers, [the Planning Commission] can require the permit applicant to make changes to the project." Through the DR process, a member of the public can ask the Planning Commission to exercise that discretionary power, as THD has done in important challenges to decisions made by Planning Department staff.

The proposed rule amendments would gut the DR process by reducing the time allowed for a DR applicant to present the case to the Planning Commission from five to three minutes. With the fee for a DR application now \$665, that amounts to \$222 per minute. Even the currently allowed five minutes is not enough, especially when DR cases, as they often do, involve complex and disputed facts and arguments and substantial bodies of supporting evidence.

DR is mandated by the Planning Code. We believe that limiting testimony to such a small amount of time is a de facto denial of due process. And, it's simple arithmetic. The proposed reduction in the presentation time for both DR requestor and project sponsor from five to three minutes together would save four minutes in a DR hearing. The proposed elimination of two minutes of rebuttal time for each would save another four minutes. A total of *eight* minutes saved! Is this worth it? We don't think so.

Julius' Castle. The state Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) has sent to neighbors within 500 feet a Notice of Intent for Julius' Castle to sell alcoholic beverages. THD will continue to monitor developments involving re-opening of the restaurant.

To join, or to get information from, the THD Planning & Zoning Committee, just send an email to PZ@THD.org. ✂

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH BEACH PARKING:



Shared Spaces—parking gained.

© JUDY IRVING



Shared Spaces—parking lost.

© DAVID LIPKIN

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HELP KEEP SAN FRANCISCO CLEAN!

by Vincent Yuen, Founder, Refuse Refuse SF

Trash and waste management is a constant battle and seemingly Sisyphean task for most metropolitan cities the world over. In San Francisco, we face this same challenge, and, unfortunately, it appears we are currently losing. Although the trash situation is hyper-local with varying conditions and attributes in each neighborhood, block, and even side of the street, there is no doubt that we all, to varying degrees, live amongst littered streets, sidewalks, planter boxes, parks, and other public spaces. And North Beach is no exception with considerable amounts of trash strewn about, especially in the heavily-trafficked commercial corridors.

Refuse Refuse SF is a campaign that aims to organize our city’s collective effort to keep itself clean. We started with just my two young children and me picking up trash on our own block at the beginning of the year. It then gathered support from other neighbors, which turned into a more formal movement. Now, we organize neighborhood cleanups and educate the public through a presentation, “SF Trash 101.” (Email info@refuserefusesf.org to request a presentation.)

For those residents who are already organizing cleanups, or interested in organizing one, please reach out to us so we can help support with supplies, event coordination, promotion, and training and staffing, if needed. We also sync with other local cleanup groups to ensure no duplication of effort and to share resources.



Clean streets are our streets. © VINCENT YUEN

What is the problem?

There are several causes for this problem of trash we have in our city. First, we live in the microclimate-capital of the world. Surrounded by water on three sides, San Francisco has ever-changing weather conditions that vary from district to district, and sometimes hour to hour, creating unique challenges that cannot be solved by blanket policies or strategies. Furthermore, we live in one of the windiest major metropolitan cities in the United States with an average wind speed of 10.6 mph (compared to 10.3 mph for the so-called “windy city” of Chicago), bringing problems even when garbage is properly disposed of and initially contained.

However, the main culprits for our collective problem are our consumption habits and the rise of single-use materials. The amount of packaging and disposable materials has ballooned, and until we meaningfully move toward reducing it, I fear that the supply of trash will outweigh our ability to manage it properly.

Ultimately, it is a cultural phenomenon that has led us to this point. We as a society have not mustered the will to refuse these unsatisfactory conditions and elevate our standards to the point where we take the actions necessary to have a cleaner city.

OK, but who cares?

This is a quality-of-life issue and one that can lead to unsanitary and unhealthy living conditions. The result can be an increased risk of both infectious and non-communicable diseases, especially amongst our unhoused residents. Needles, feces, broken glass, rusty nails, hazardous waste, and chicken bones bring problems even for our dogs. In addition, uncared-for neighborhoods invite crime and further deterioration. We also live on the coast, and much of what goes into our storm drains enters our ocean, bay, and waterways untreated.

Although it seems like an unwinnable fight, there are things we can do to turn the tide. To start, we need to collect data to understand the problem and help inform our strategies to mitigate it. One of the initial tasks of our campaign to keep San Francisco clean is to locate, identify, and measure the trash in our public spaces. Over the past several months, with the help of volunteers, we have been conducting waste audits in which we tally trash in different neighborhoods of the city. In North Beach, we found that similar to other areas, west sides of streets have more trash than east sides. Due to the predominantly onshore wind patterns we have most of the year, west sides are sheltered by buildings, thereby creating eddies that allow trash to accumulate. The presence of different types of businesses also affects the volume and makeup of the litter. We found that on Grant Avenue, where many bars and convenience stores are located, trash levels were almost double that of most other streets, with cigarette butts more than 50% of the litter count, whereas other parts of North Beach and citywide, cigarette butts are a little more than 30%.

What are possible solutions and strategies to employ?

What can we do to better our situation? More trash bins could be one. Often, it



We see the bag as half full, not half empty. © VINCENT YUEN

seems you can be walking for blocks before passing a public trash can. Then-Mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom, experimented with removing many public trash cans under the assumption that they attracted illegal dumping and heavy trash accumulation. However, the trash just kept finding other places to gather. Many districts, including North Beach, have subsequently installed Big Belly trash cans, which have some advantages to the standard SF public trash bins. The cans are designed so that people and animals cannot rummage through them, and they have a foot kick to avoid the “ick factor” of touching things with your hands. Many Big Belly cans also have trash compactors, which reduce the frequency with which they have to be emptied. However, drawbacks include vandalism that often causes them to break and the price: up to \$3,000 per year to lease.

Additionally, there could be better coordination of existing services. For example, on some streets, street sweeping takes place on a Monday, followed by Recology pick-up on a Tuesday. We know, of course, that trash escapes from our bins during pickup. If we simply reversed this order, we stand a better chance of having a cleaner street for the rest of the week. This schedule shouldn’t cost any more money—it’s just a matter of adjusting the service pattern.



Never too young to volunteer. © VINCENT YUEN

What can you do about it?

We are not helpless in this struggle. We established Refuse Refuse SF with the aim of coordinating our city’s effort to keep trash at bay. Our local government does not have the money or resources to do it alone, so it’s up to us, its citizens, to take responsibility. We aim to motivate fellow San Franciscans to take actions needed to clean our streets, beautify our neighborhoods, and encourage others to join our cause. We organize our own events and cleanup opportunities, and we partner with other local organizations with the ultimate goal of keeping North Beach and the rest of San Francisco free of refuse.

NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP
Saturday, August 7th, 1-3 pm
Meet at NE corner of Washington Square Park
To sign up:
email “North Beach” to info@refuserefusesf.org or visit refuserefusesf.org

FARINATA, FISH, AND FAMILY

REMEMBERING ALESSANDRO BACCARI

by Charles Versaggi

In his play of the same name, playwright John Guare popularized the concept of *six degrees of separation* — that everyone on average is six, or fewer, social connections away from each other. From the moment I first met Alessandro Baccari Jr., I discovered we shared more than a few personal connections and a love for our Italian heritage. Spanning nearly 93 years, heart-driven by spiritual purpose, unbounded compassion, and love of God and humanity, Baccari completed his *passeggiata* through life on April 30, 2021. Our special relationship ended too soon.

Baccari was renowned for being a walking oral history of North Beach, where he was born and raised by northern Italian immigrants, Alessandro Sr. and Aida, who once lived in a flat above Mario’s Bohemian Cigar Store Café on the corner of Union Street and Columbus Avenue. His friend, *San Francisco Chronicle* columnist Sam Whiting, called him “an unstoppable, one-man North Beach booster club, chamber of commerce, and historical society.” A dedicated historian of San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf and all things Italian American, Baccari was also famous (or ‘infamous,’ depending on your patience and attention span) for his colorful stories, often told while giving guided tours on his walks — *passeggiatas* — through his beloved Italian neighborhood.

I first met Baccari for lunch in the summer of 2017. Over the next four years, it was the first of many meetings at the North Beach Restaurant on Stockton Street, a block from Washington Square and Saints Peter and Paul Church, where we both attended grammar school, a generation apart, nurtured by our Sicilian-Italian community. As he sat before me, sartorially suited in Italian elegance, I decided to forego my formal interview as our conversation soon went from introductions to a panoply of personal stories — mine as well as his.

An articulate man who speaks as much with his hands as with his warm eyes and gentle face, Baccari appears to be giving Catholic mass, his hands gesticulating as if to give benediction or Holy Communion. He earns my respect as he looks into my eyes, listening with patience and speaking sincerely.

With wise eyes beaming large through his thick glasses, his animated voice and light-hearted, innocent laughter reminds me of the 1930s comedic actor Ed Winn, known for his Perfect Fool comedy character. But Baccari is no fool, nor does he suffer them lightly. I felt I had met a magical wizard, a holy man, wise as the Dalai Lama, with the presence and spirit of the pope. Like his father, Alessandro Baccari Sr., he had a rich life encompassing many lives, who touched me and so many others because he embraced and celebrated life and humanity.



Tale Padre Tale Figlio—Alessandro Baccari’s photo exhibit showcasing his and his father’s work. © ALESSANDRO BACCARI JR.



Alessandro Baccari Jr. speaks as much with his hands as with his warm eyes and gentle face.

© CHARLES VERSAGGI

Baccari’s family was from the Piedmont region of northern Italy. A major theme of our conversations was the central importance of family and how North Beach was once a thriving community of Italians that owned and cherished its residents. Over my visits to North Beach, I had met a Serbian waiter, a Ukrainian bakery clerk, an Iranian maître d’hôtel, and a Russian cafe manager of an Italian bakery. All reminders that North Beach was losing its *Italianita* (“Little Italy”) — San Francisco’s prominent Italian *ghetto* (the Italian diminutive of *borghetto*, or borough).

While Pavarotti sings *Nessun Dorma* over the sound system, a Chinese waiter delivers our orders: Baccari’s favorite soup — *farinata*, a chicken broth of cannellini beans, Tuscan kale, and polenta, drizzled with olive oil, seasoned with Parmesan cheese. Our main course is local fish. “Look at that — beautiful petrale sole!” he gushes.

“I’ve heard people who know you often roll their eyes at your storytelling,” I said, sipping my soup, tongue-in-cheek.

Baccari throws back his head and laughs. “Oh, yes — stories. I’ve got a-million-of-em!” he says, in what could be a San Francisco accent, where words are often run together. “Once I hear something, I’ll always remember it.”

Recognizing a regular patron, the Italian maître d’ comes to our table to greet us. “Signore Baccari, come va?” (“Mr. Baccari, how’s it going?”)

“Sempre avanti!”

“Always forward!” was Baccari’s living mantra. And what an inspirational life, modeled after the Italian Renaissance, he lived. Once an award-winning fencer for the Olympic Club, trained in boxing as well as ballet, he was ambidextrous and could touché or sucker punch you either way. After Saints Peter and Paul’s grammar school, Baccari graduated from Sacred Heart High School. With degrees in political science from Santa Clara University and UC Berkeley, he could outmatch speech rivals with a sharp riposte as well as a quick repartee.

He was a lucky boxer. No broken nose, no head injuries. But busted hands a lot, though. “God, I did a lot of fighting. I was afraid of my maternal grandmother, Amelia, who lived in the Marina. If I ran away from a fight, she’d beat the hell out of me. She was a demon.”

On Saturdays, his grandmother would take him to ballet lessons and then to Newman’s Gym (where

George Foreman trained) in the Tenderloin to learn how to box. “I remember coming home from school. Richie Napolitano jokingly slaps my face, and I turned the other cheek. My grandmother, watching from her flat, opens her window and says, ‘What’ta you do’ing?’”

“I’m doing what mommy told me to do. Do like Jesu’ — turn the other cheek.”

“My grandmother says, ‘If I pull’a your pants down, you got’a two more cheeks and I’m gon’na beat the hell out of’em! You go get’em, and don’t come home till-a-you beat’em up!’”

“So, I chase him down to his father’s café, and his father sees me beating him up. His father starts hitting me. My grandmother comes down with a broom and she whacks him. ‘Mr. Napolitano, if you ever hit’a my grandson again, my husband’s coming after you!’ Nobody wanted to fight my grandma.”

Baccari was close friends with the older Joe DiMaggio, a second-generation Italian who also grew up in North Beach. “We all had nicknames — ‘Harry the Horse,’ ‘Coke,’ and ‘Nigga’ — DiMaggio was a dark-skinned Sicilian. My nickname was ‘Skooney,’ short for *scunizio* which means ‘little street urchin’ in Italian —



Serafina, 1989.

© ALESSANDRO BACCARI JR.

BACCARI JR. — “MR. NORTH BEACH”

somebody who’s always devious,” Baccari explains. His curiosity always got him into trouble.

He was an altar boy in DiMaggio’s first wedding to actress Dorothy Arnold at Saints Peter and Paul Church, which was built by Baccari’s great, great uncle, Father Raffaele M. Piperni, who brought the Salesians of Don Bosco religious order to America. (The Church’s history is chronicled in Baccari’s book, *Saints Peter & Paul Church: The Chronicles of the Italian Cathedral of the West, 1884-1984*.)

“What a crowd!” Baccari said. “Some 30,000 people in front of Saints Peter and Paul Church for his wedding. Contrary to popular lore, DiMaggio’s second wedding to Marilyn Monroe was not at Saints Peter and Paul. No, I arranged that for him at San Francisco City Hall.”

“Creativity fosters longevity” is another mantra of Baccari, who managed to compress more than one life into his 92 years. In addition to being a Fulbright award-winning photographer, poet, painter, and author of three books — and a coloring book on North Beach more popular with adults — he was a city planner, political speechwriter, research economist, historian, museum curator, lecturer, and an associate dean of business at San Francisco State University. During his early career, he was a radio broadcaster, filmmaker, and Peabody-award-winning TV producer working with Mike Wallace as host of the PM West/PM East show, which originated from San Francisco and New York simultaneously.

With his Italian-born wife, Catherine (Piccirillo), who died in 2012, he co-founded Alessandro Baccari & Associates in 1963, a public affairs and marketing firm that publicized entertainers and supported several city planning projects. Baccari served as a consultant to eight San Francisco mayors — including Mayor Joseph Alioto, who was his close friend and mentor. His clients included the hungry i nightclub and the Playboy Club, and he helped to introduce Lenny Bruce, Bill Cosby, Mort Sahl, The Gateway Singers, The Kingston Trio, and Barbara Streisand, among others. “I did all the ads for the hungry i,” Baccari said. “Enrico Banducci still owes me \$12,000!”

Fisherman’s Wharf was one of Baccari’s key accounts, but more than just work, the wharf and its people were the love of his life. His book, *San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf* (2006), remains one of the best historical accounts on the subject. As a founding member of the Wharf’s historical society, he was instrumental (with the help of the wharf community) in establishing the non-denominational Fishermen’s and Seamen’s Memorial Chapel, which honors the names of those who lost their lives at sea.

Across from Pier 45, the chapel is the site of The Annual Blessing of the Fishing Fleet and Madonna Del Lume (“The Mother of Light”) Festival, a Sicilian tradition originating in Porticello, Sicily. At the age of seven, Baccari spoke in English and Italian at the first Madonna Del Lume festival in 1935. Not long thereafter, he would serve as its master of ceremonies for most of his life.

Baccari once wanted to be a Broadway song and dance man. He knew Frank Sinatra, whose act he once followed at the Cal Neva Lodge & Resort in Lake Tahoe. “Sinatra just finished his act. I would put my head between the curtains, get a spotlight, and tell the audience ‘You’ve heard all these great acts. Now, you ain’t heard nothin’ yet until you hear me!’ And the curtain opens: ‘Toot, toot, tootsie goodbye’ — my cane tapping. I could tap, run against the wall, and flip over like Donald O’Connor. I can’t do that now, I’d kill myself!”

Over one of our lunches, I learned Baccari knew my baptismal godfather, Giuseppe Conforte, better known as Joe Conforte, the world-reputed “King of Prostitution,” founder of Nevada’s most notorious house of ill repute — the Mustang Ranch. (I wrote about Joe Conforte in the winter 2021 issue of *The Semaphore*.) While working as a broadcaster for local Westinghouse KPIX TV, Baccari did a broadcast from Virginia City, profiling Conforte and what it was like running a brothel. Conforte offered to fly Baccari to the brothel on his private plane to sample his special services.

“I don’t want you to worry. Every girl is certified



Nude Study, circa 1938.

© ALESSANDRO BACCARI SR.

with a stamp on their ass. I’ll fly you back,” Baccari recounted, exaggerating Conforte’s gangster accent. He politely declined.

Like his son, Alessandro Baccari Sr. was also a Renaissance man. An Italian immigrant from Tuscany who grew up in Naples, he was a highly accomplished painter, playwright, musician (cello and piano), and photographer who had studios at Powell and Sutter Streets and above Fugazi Hall on Green Street. He knew Paul Robeson — the black-listed actor, deep bass singer and Civil Rights activist; Guglielmo Marconi; Edward Weston; Ansel Adams; Eugene O’Neil; Benny Bufano; and Harry Bridges, San Francisco’s famous leftist labor leader who led the four-day longshoremen strike that resulted in “Bloody Thursday” in 1936.

“Marconi loved him so much, he made him his official photographer,” Baccari said. “Dad was the official photographer for all these great ballet dancers, opera singers, and play actors.”

Baccari’s father introduced him to Luciano Pavarotti and Benny Bufano, with whom Baccari Jr. became good friends. “If she walked, talked, or crawled, Pavarotti would try to screw her,” he said. “For 30 years, I spent Christmas with Bufano — he was helluv’an artist.”

Baccari stands at the lectern before a small crowd of admirers at the Museo Italo Americano, at San Francisco’s Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture. He’s here to introduce *Tale Padre Tale Figlio* (“Like Father, Like Son”), a joint photo exhibit illustrating the unique insights into composition and design he and his father shared. It’s August 2017.

Baccari explains how his father would ask his friends, William Saroyan, Eugene O’Neill, Paul Robeson, and Edward Weston, “Would you be the father of my son for a day?” In this way, numerous surrogate fathers helped train him to listen, communicate, and learn about their professions and informing *The Fathers My Father Gave Me*, the last book Baccari Jr. was writing before his death.

“My father sent me on the train to Monterey to meet Edward Weston. I was 12 years old,” Baccari recalls. “Weston said, ‘Your dad wants me to talk to you about life, and we’ll talk about life...but first we’re going to go photograph the beach.’

“So, I said, I’ll go get my camera. ‘No camera. Your father wants me to explain how to photograph with your eyes.’

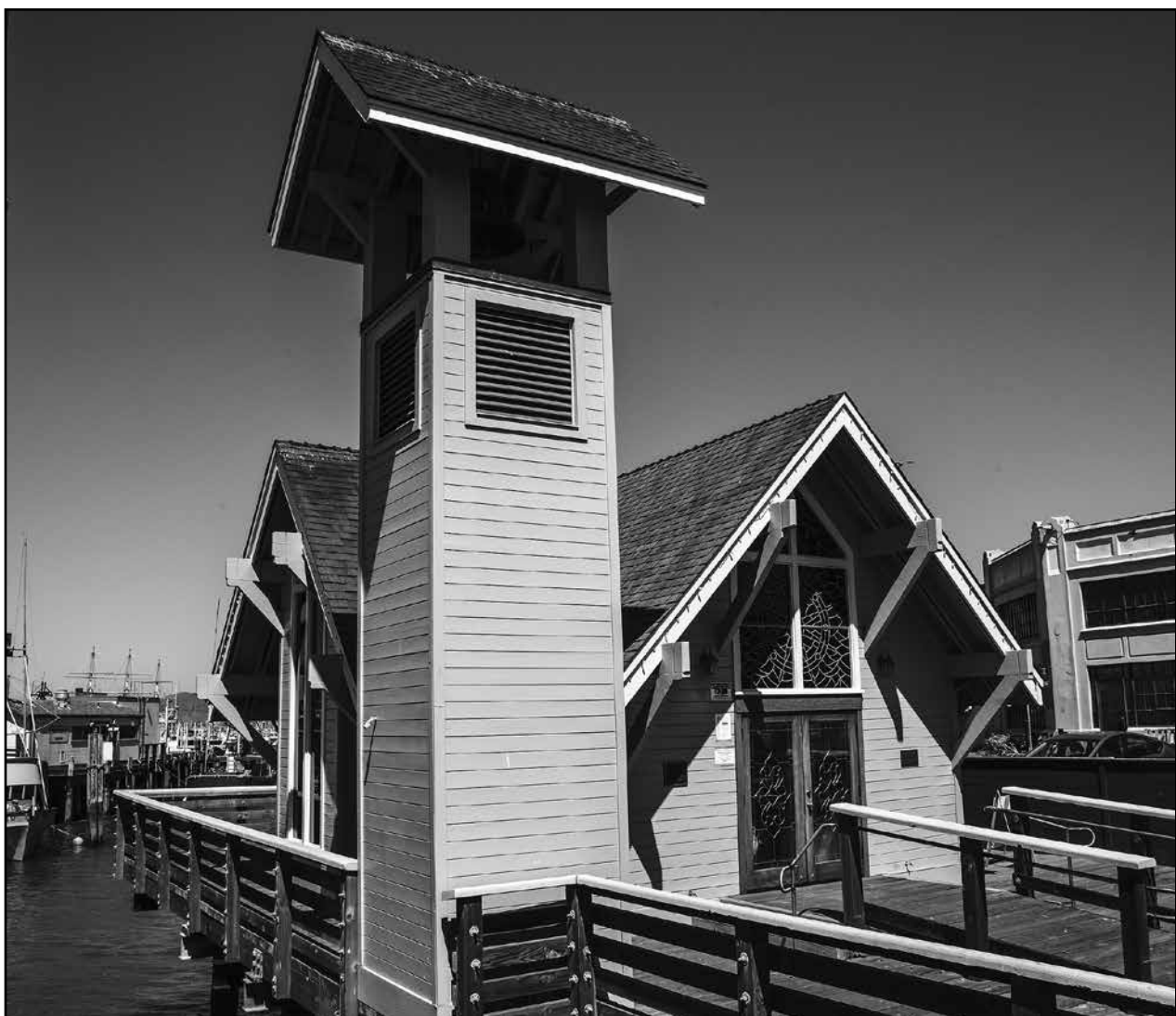
“So, we go to the beach. We’re not there one minute. He says, ‘Close your eyes!’ Jesus, I got scared. I close my eyes.

“‘What do you see?’ I see the water, rocks. ‘You’ve seen nothing!’ At Carmel Beach, the waves almost drowned me. We spent days just shooting with my eyes. To this day, I record everything in my head before I commit to a photograph.”

For Baccari, “Every image is a prayer.” He ended his evening talk: “The greatest gift a camera can give or offer a serious photographer is that of seeing, and through seeing, understanding a little more about humanity, the significant details of life, and the world around us. And in the hands of a perceptive person, the photographer’s work becomes an art form.”

I regret that I had not met Alessandro Baccari earlier in my life and treasure the short time we spent together. What started as a photoessay assignment ended in a deep connection of the heart. He was a very special person who illuminated and inspired me with his gift of loving friendship. He was truly a man of purpose who lived with integrity, compassion, and love for his fellow humans, regardless of their heritage.

Nobody is truly gone as long as we remember them. Grazie mille amico. Ti voglio tanto bene. ❖



The Fishermen’s and Seamen’s Memorial Chapel.

© CHARLES VERSAGGI



TRANSPORTATION REPORT

by Howard Wong, Committee Chair
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Our neighborhood by the Bay is where little 39-Coit buses “climb halfway to the stars” (with apologies to Tony Bennett). Taken for granted, this transit mainstay stretches from hilltops to the Embarcadero, connecting Telegraph Hill, Coit Tower, North Beach, Washington Square, Safeway, Trader Joe’s, Pier 39, and Fisherman’s Wharf. During the pandemic, some seniors and disabled and medically challenged persons felt stranded on steep hilltops, up to six long blocks from bus stops. Being reinstituted mid-August, the 39-Coit bus also restores “last-mile” linkages to the Muni circulatory system, like capillaries in the blood stream.

39-COIT BUS: A STORIED HISTORY

Yes, the 39-Coit is Muni’s shortest bus route at 1.6 miles, but it’s a mighty warrior, fighting budget cuts and existential threats. In 1954, Telegraph Hill Dwellers itself was founded to save the bus from elimination. Every 10 years or so, neighbors have won multiple battles to fend off the 39’s termination, shortened routes, or service cuts. In 2008, THD’s Transportation Committee worked with Muni to extend the route to Pier 39, attracting more ridership with a catchy “PIER 39 = COIT 39” slogan. In its heydays, known for its friendly drivers and bohemian characters, the bus served like “Cheers,” where everybody knows your name. No reason why we can’t restore those community traditions.

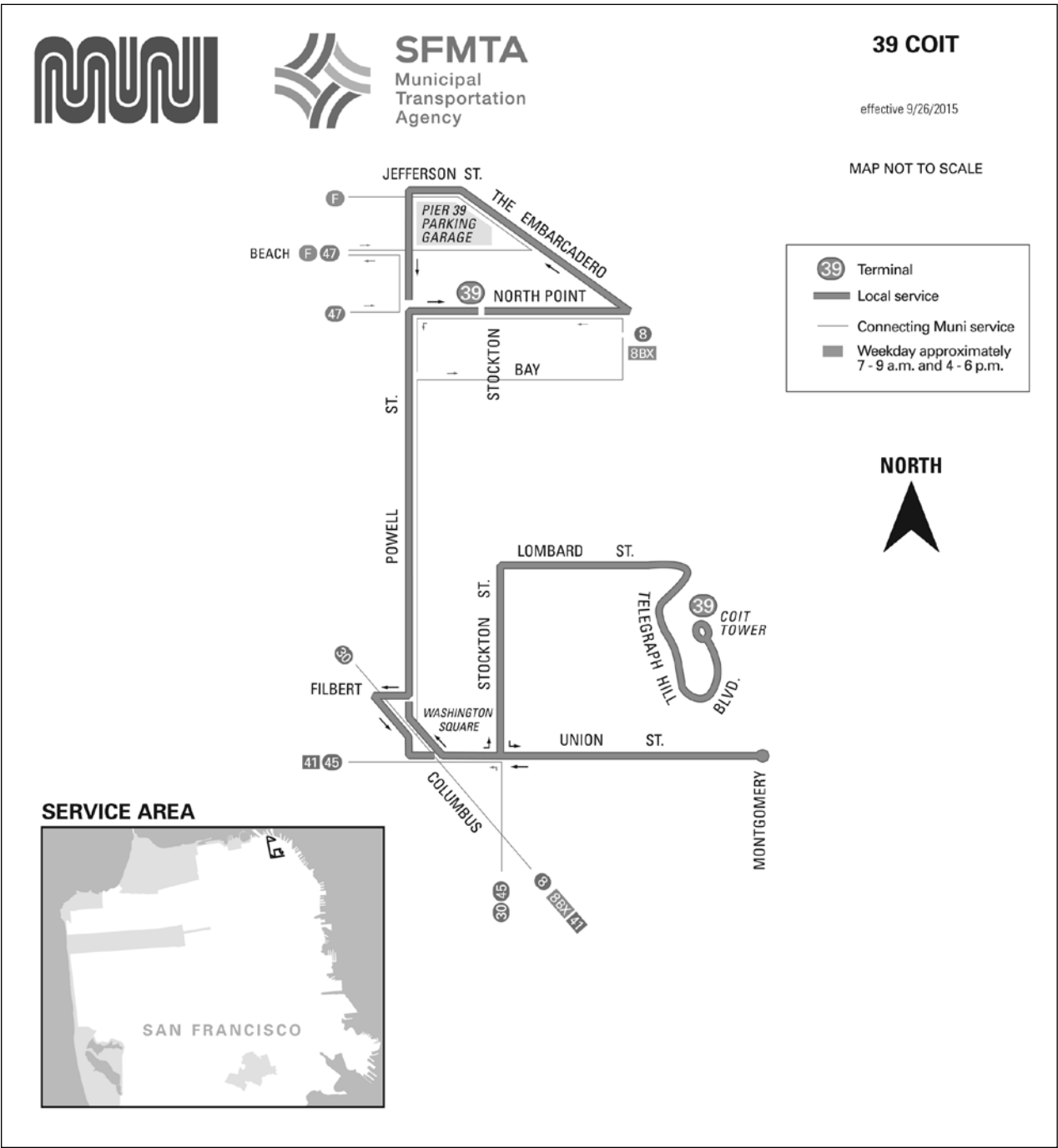
39-COIT BUS SHOULD BE USED BY EVERYONE

It’s a beautiful ride. If you’re not regularly using this bus for transit connections or shopping, take a 39-Coit tour of the neighborhood—to see some of San Francisco’s most historic and scenic sights. Direct friends and visitors to 39’s stops and signs that show the route. With ridership at 30% of pre-pandemic levels, Muni needs a boost.

MUNI RECOVERY PLAN: BEYOND THE SQUEAKY WHEEL APPROACH

Recently, restoration of transit lines, like the K-Line and 36/52 bus, seemed to be based on political capital, certain neighborhoods and supervisors successfully lobbying Muni management. In mid-August, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) will implement a more comprehensive recovery plan, including full/modified route restorations, school trippers, route extensions, and increased frequency. The overall goal: 98% of residents and 100% of equity neighborhoods to be within a ¼ mile of a Muni stop (about a three-block range). In the Fall, cable cars will return, starting with the Hyde-Powell line, augmenting the already-restored F-Line historic streetcars and the J, N, and K/T light rail. Social distancing is no longer required on Muni vehicles, although face masks are still mandatory. Financially, Muni has been stabilized with one-time federal recovery funds. With uncertainty as to the

39 COIT BUS RETURNS: A HILLTOP INSTITUTION



return of commuters, downtown workers, tourism, conventioners, and parking fees and general fund revenues, Muni plans for an overall 85% restoration of pre-pandemic service levels by 2022. Major hurdles include deficiencies in night service and the hiring/ training of new operators.

PARKLETS AND SHARED STREETS: PERMANENT PLANS

Although 50% of small businesses were still closed as of early July, parklets and shared street spaces have saved many enterprises by providing some revenue. Post-pandemic, precise codes/planning/ possible legislation are needed to assure beautiful public realms, instead of a Wild West approach in design quality, streetscape master-plans, safety precautions, lighting, landscaping, parking/ traffic management, accessibility, and equitable use of public land. Moreover, like great pedestrian streets



39 Coit bus at Coit Tower. © SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER

around the world coursing with thousands of people around the clock, street closures require great design to create active spaces, constant circulation flow, and beautiful places for people.



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WATERFRONT REPORT

by Howard Wong, AIA, Member, Southern Advisory Committee (Port)
howard.wong@thd.org

Fully engaged, the Port of San Francisco (Port) deployed staff as disaster service workers and opened testing, temporary housing, PPE storage, and food distribution centers on its properties. Port tenants were helped with rent deferrals, repayment plans, and rent forgiveness programs, as well as streamlined permitting and shared spaces for outdoor dining. The Port is owed \$22 million in unpaid rent. Overall, Port revenue is down 45% and retail revenue, 75%. Revenues from maritime cargo and industry have been stable. As a self-supporting Enterprise Department, the Port operates on its own revenues with no general fund contribution. The pandemic has depleted much of the Port's emergency funds, requiring adjustments like hiring freezes, reductions in contracting, defunding of capital projects, and delayed material purchases. Prior to the pandemic, the Port already faced a billion-dollar capital backlog. Going forward, an Economic Recovery Initiative Program will seek new revenue generation, cost savings, economic productivity, and federal funding.

JEFFERSON STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The second phase has been completed, beautifying Fisherman's Wharf and Jefferson Street from Aquatic Park to Powell Street. Work includes widened sidewalks, banded-patterned streets, and improved bike parking, landscaping, trees, and public seating.

The new plaza at the Fisherman's Wharf sign (at Taylor Street) is a bit plain but useful for musicians and performers. Although many businesses remain closed, this fresh public realm seems to reinvigorate street life. Worth visiting.

EMBARCADERO ENHANCEMENT PROJECT

The goal of a better/safer Embarcadero led to a 2018 concept design, including a two-way protected bikeway, enhanced pedestrian crossings, and pedestrian safety improvements. Construction has started on three quick-build projects to expedite Vision Zero safety upgrades. The Central Embarcadero Quick-Build Project is being reviewed by the Port Commission and the San Francisco Municipal Transit Authority Board

PANDEMIC: PORT RESPONSE AND BUDGET IMPACTS



Improved Jefferson Street at Fisherman's Wharf.

© HOWARD WONG

of Directors. However, the Northern Embarcadero project (Broadway to North Point Streets) is not moving forward due to budget issues and will have a separate public re-engagement to consider design options, in conjunction with a Pier 39 and Fisherman's Wharf circulation study.

WATERFRONT SPECIAL EVENT AND ACTIVATION PROGRAM

As an outgrowth of the updated Waterfront Plan, the Port has issued an RFQ (Request for Quotation) to seek qualified entities that can provide public/outdoor special events and activate the Port's parks, open spaces, piers, and wharves. The Waterfront Plan's general values and equity goals will be a guide.

WATERFRONT RESILIENCE PROGRAM

The Port is developing a sea-level-rise adaptation plan and seismic vulnerability assessments for the waterfront as well as a flood vulnerability study with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Especially at risk is the 100-year-old Embarcadero Seawall—the

three-mile-long waterfront foundation stretching from Fisherman's Wharf to Mission Creek—that supports utility/transportation infrastructure (BART, Muni, Ferry), provides flood protection for downtown San Francisco, and underpins the Historic Embarcadero Promenade, iconic SF destinations, landmarks, parks, and businesses.

PIER 24 PHOTOGRAPHY REOPENS: RENT DISPUTE SETTLED

As previously reported, Pier 24 Photography faced eviction after years of negotiations over a rent dispute. Fortunately, the Port's new four-year agreement preserves the free nonprofit art museum that showcases twentieth century photography. The private collection of the Pilara Family Foundation, as well as special shows of major photographers, is exhibited in spacious, sleek galleries at its waterfront site under the Bay Bridge. Reopening with a ten-year retrospective, Pier 24 Photography requires advance appointments, available at www.pier24.org, for up to 30 visitors at any given time.



NEIGHBORHOOD ENGAGEMENT REPORT

by Nick Ferris, Committee Chair
nick.ferris@thd.org

The Neighborhood Engagement Committee is a special subcommittee tasked with engaging new and larger audiences in the neighborhood with the hope of their joining THD as part of the proceedings. While the Social & Program Committee focuses on membership-only events, those of Neighborhood Engagement are open to the public.

In the past, we've organized debates for District Attorney and District 3 Supervisor. We've held forums with relevant and interesting figures like David Talbot and Tom Ammiano, both of whom had authored new books. Initially, we offered onsite events but had to transition quickly to virtual programs due to the pandemic. The latter have been so successful, we've decided to continue offering them as well as in-person events when those are permitted again.

Here's a look at what we have coming up next:

This month San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin and San Francisco Chief of Police Bill Scott will join THD for a virtual discussion about the current state of affairs with regard to crime and safety

and provide a forward-looking view of San Francisco. Joe Eskenazi, a favorite local reporter who is the Editor of *Mission Local*, has agreed to serve as moderator. We'll make sure there's lots of time for audience Q&A, so please bring your thoughts and queries.

During the fall, we'll host a conversation between Gary Kamiya and artist Paul Madonna. Gary is the author of *Spirits of San Francisco: Voyages Through the Unknown*; Paul collaborated and provided the drawings. Gary's previous book is the highly regarded *Cool Gray City of Love*, while Paul is the author of the bestseller, *All Over Coffee*. This is a highly requested event by THD members who have seen the pair in similar programs.

THD is a neighborhood organization, and one of our main goals is to build community. With COVID rules being lifted, we intend to introduce a new series of "Neighborhood Happy Hours," hosting one each month at local businesses. This new series offers the opportunity to meet new friends, support local businesses, and learn what's happening around the neighborhood. Sure to be fun!

Please look out for an email providing detailed information about these events, and follow us on social media (<https://fb.com/telegraph.hill.dwellers> or @THDwellers on Twitter) for the most up-to-date specifics. It's an exciting time in North Beach and on Telegraph Hill, so if you have ideas for activities and/or want to get more involved in your community, perhaps joining the Neighborhood Engagement Committee, please reach out to me at nick.ferris@thd.org. Thanks!



ADVERTISEMENT

KIDS CORNER

by Sarah Kliban
kids@thd.org



SHANTANU PAI, 12

Favorite place in the neighborhood?

The park—because there’s also a swimming pool there. I can just chill with my friends and play some games like basketball and stuff like that.

If you could create a new holiday, what would it be?

In the summer, I could make a holiday called ‘Pool Day.’ They would leave all the pools open for people just to cool off when it’s hot. It would be free to everybody and open until 7 or 8 o’clock.

What would it be like if there were no cell phones?

Maybe people would send letters in the mail like the old days. It would be really hard to communicate. You couldn’t tell your friends when you wanted to go to the park. It would be a bad thing, to be totally honest.

If you had a talking parrot, what would you teach it to say?

I would teach it to say, “Hey, Alexa, what time is it?” so it could ask Alexa what time it is when I’m in a rush.



ANTONELLA GERMANO, 9

Favorite place in the neighborhood?

It would be between Coit Tower and the park. I guess it’s the park. I see a lot of my friends there, and I love it there. I get to ride vehicles there. Since Covid-19 started, I’ve met a lot

of kids there. They are better friends than the kids at school.

If you could create a new holiday, what would it be?

A holiday to celebrate our differences, and everybody gets together for a big feast at Coit Tower. ‘Differences Day.’ The celebration of everyone. Any skin color coming together telling each other what they like about each other.

What would it be like if there were no cell phones?

To be honest, I have no clue what in the world I would do. I made a deal with my mom that if I do well in school, I might get a cell phone at the age of 10. I can’t think of another good reward. Maybe instead of calling people, we’d just get together? It might be bad and good.

If you had a talking parrot, what would you teach it to say?

Probably good words. At the park, I hear a lot of potty mouths, and I don’t want a potty-mouth parrot. Maybe something like “You look good,” or “You look nice.” I would teach it some jokes—like “What did the ladybug say when it found a great leaf?” “This is unleaf-able!”



DARCI SIVASUBRAMANIAN, 9

Favorite place in the neighborhood?

Joe DiMaggio. Sometimes I like playing there with my friends and I also like playing tennis and basketball there.

If you could create a new holiday, what would it be?

Celebrating your kids day. All the parents let their kids do whatever they want and let them have so much free time. It could be called ‘Kids Day’ and it would be in the Fall.

What would it be like if there were no cell phones?

Nobody would be able to call other people and talk with them or Facetime anybody. If someone’s in another country or state, you couldn’t see how they’re doing. It’s kind of a bad and good thing at the same time. People wouldn’t look at their phones so much, so it won’t hurt their eyes so much. I’d like it. I’d run outside and say, “There’s no more cell phones in the world!”

If you had a talking parrot, what would you teach it to say?

I would teach it to greet people when they come in the door. “Hello!” “Welcome!” And a simple conversation. Maybe if it doesn’t learn how to fly, I’d teach it to fly.



RAJAT PAI, 9

Favorite place in the neighborhood?

The park—because I like to play games there, and they have a lot of equipment. I like to play soccer or basketball there.

If you could create a new holiday, what would it be?

A holiday about gifts because I like getting gifts on my birthday and Christmas. “Giftmas.” People would get a day off, and they would get gifts.

What would it be like if there were no cell phones?

We would go out way more because you’d probably be bored at home—a lot. People couldn’t text or message, so if you had to message or something, you’d have to put it in the mail or call someone on the telephone. It would take a long time to get there. You couldn’t call 9-1-1 or the ambulance. Not many people have regular phones anymore.

If you had a talking parrot, what would you teach it to say?

How about “Why?” Or when I get home, it would say “Hello Rajat!”



A large black and white advertisement for a play. The background is a photograph of a city skyline at night, with the Golden Gate Bridge visible. In the foreground, a person is shown in a dynamic pose, as if flying or jumping, with a hula hoop around their waist. The text "FUGAZI PRESENTS" is at the top left, "DEAR SAN FRANCISCO" is in large bold letters in the center, "A HIGH-FLYING LOVE STORY" is below it, and "FROM THE 7 Fingers" is at the bottom center.

TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW!

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Sax solo on Green Street.

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NEIGHBORHOOD SLOWLY RETURNS TO LIFE



Lion's Den, first new nightclub in Chinatown since 1984.

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PHOTOS BY DENNIS HEARNE



Cinema in Jack Kerouac Alley.

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Young street musicians.

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The Saloon survives—as it always has.

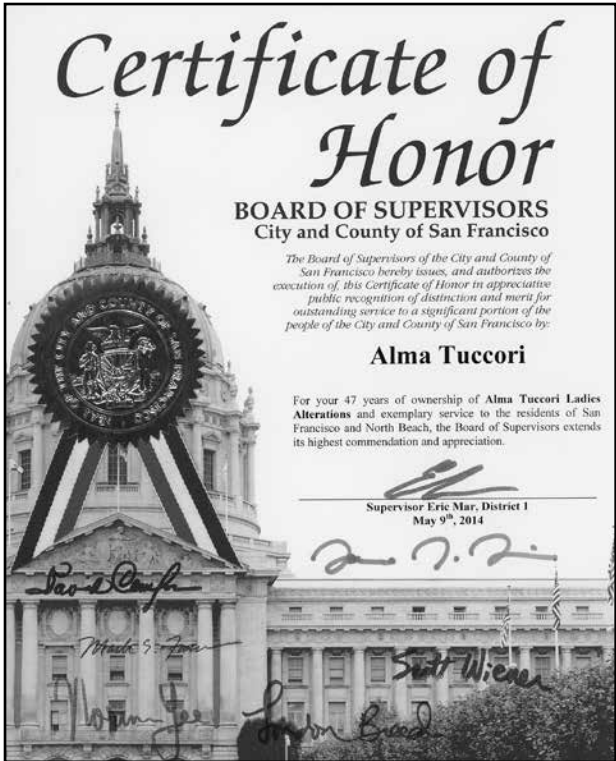
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ALMA’S SHOP—A MEMOIR

by Audrey Tomaselli

As I walked home from the party at Mary and Tom Noyes’ home, I passed by 444 Union. The building had been painted. The scaffolding was still up. But if you looked up under the scaffolding, there was the old, somewhat battered but intact sign, “Alma’s Shop. Dressmaking and Alterations.”

I wondered why the painters, having covered the rest of the building, left the sign intact! So incredible. And eerie. Then I crept up close to the window and pressed my nose to it. There was the old industrial sewing machine that she loved and had lamented having to leave because she didn’t have room to store it. There was the counter where we spread out our garments and showed her what needed attention. There were the empty hangers on the closet poles, the little dressing room in the back with the mirror and the raised platform where you stepped up so she could access your hem.



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TREASURER’S REPORT

by Nick Ferris, THD Treasurer
nick.ferris@thd.org

Another month passes by, and the neighborhood reopens a bit more. I write this report from the back corner of Caffè Trieste. How quickly things seem back to normal with masks off and a coffee in hand. It’s been wonderful to shake hands and hug friends. Let’s hope this all continues!

I am happy to share that THD remains in a very healthy financial position. We’ve been fortunate to retain strong membership throughout the pandemic and have seen generous donations from members. Our fiscal year began in April; after three months, we have a net positive income of \$984.40. Since we generally target a breakeven budget, we expect to end the fiscal year with a few hundred dollars of positive income.

As readers will remember, we ended last year with roughly \$7,000 in savings. We’re already planning a series of social and educational events that might expend some of it. If you have ideas for using some of these savings for the betterment of the neighborhood, please reach out to me at nick.ferris@thd.org.

As I surveyed the room, I felt as if I were in a movie glimpsing the past. Yet I felt lucky to have this one last glance at a very special place. I had often practiced my Italian with her, and she gently corrected me but always complimented me on my progress. I wish I were a writer so that I could document all this in a special way.

Many years ago, there was a poignant piece in *The*

Semaphore written by Chris Chouteau. He mentioned the wonderful little details of how Alma would jot your phone number on a scrap of paper and pin it to your garment. And if you didn’t have the right amount of cash, it would be settled up next time.

Ahhh, another sad departure from our neighborhood.

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BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

APRIL- JUNE 2021

by Mary Lipian, Recording Secretary
mary.lipian@thd.org

APRIL 2021

The Nominating Committee recommended the following slate of proposed officers and directors for the 2021-2022 THD Board.

Proposed Officers:

President: Al Fontes
Vice President: Romalyn Schmaltz
Recording Secretary: Mary Lipian
Corresponding Secretary: Melissa Dong Mountain
Treasurer: Nick Ferris
Financial Secretary/Membership: Andy Katz
Historian: Nancy Shanahan
Past President: Stan Hayes
Semaphore Editor: Cap Caplan

Proposed Directors 2020-2022:

Don Raichle
Termeh Yeghiazarian
Julia Martin Murphy
Nadya Williams

Proposed Directors 2021-2023:

Patrice Ignacio Moll
Katie Hopkins
Kate Butler
Greg Giachino

MAY 2021

THD's Annual Meeting was held on May 3, 2021 via Zoom, with guest speaker Dr. Grant Colfax, Director of Health, San Francisco Department of Health. The Board slate for 2021-2022 was present-



THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

Get involved in our neighborhood and make a difference! Join a THD committee and help keep the Hill a special place to live.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Art & Culture: Romalyn Schmaltz romalyn.schmaltz@thd.org
Budget: Nick Ferris nick.ferris@thd.org
Membership: Andy Katz THDmembership@gmail.com
Oral History Project: Judy Irving judy.irving@thd.org
Transportation: Howard Wong howard.wong@thd.org
Parks & Trees: Don Raichle don.raichle@thd.org
Planning & Zoning: Mary Lipian and Nancy Shanahan
mary.lipian@thd.org and nancy.shanahan@thd.org
Semaphores: Cap Caplan (Editor) cap.caplan@thd.org
David Lipkin (Photo Editor) david.lipkin@thd.org
Social & Program: Kate Butler kate.butler@thd.org
Waterfront: Howard Wong howard.wong@thd.org
Communications: Communications: Al Fontes, Katie Hopkins, Sarah Kliban al.fontes@thd.org

PLANNING & ZONING COMMITTEE MEETS last Thursdays
of each month. Call for time and location.
986-7070 or 563-3494 or 391-5652.

LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Central Police District Community Advisory Board: Daryl Babbitt
Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods: Al Fontes
Friends of Washington Square Liaison: Don Raichle
Northeast Waterfront Advisory Group Member: Open

ed to the THD General Membership and approved. Paula McCabe and Larry Habegger were presented with the Telegraph Hill Dwellers' 2020 "Outstanding Contribution to the Neighborhood" Award for carrying on the legacy to tend and beautify the Grace Marchant Garden.

The 2021-2022 executive committee consists of Al Fontes, president, Romalyn Schmaltz, vice-president, Nick Ferris, treasurer, and two board members elected by the board, Nancy Shanahan and Stan Hayes, for the sole purpose of transacting emergency business that may arise between board meetings.

The following four special committees were re-approved for the THD 2021-2022 year:

Communications Committee
Neighborhood Engagement Committee
Art and Culture Committee
Oral History Committee

JUNE 2021


THD sent a letter of support to the Entertainment Commission for "The 7 Fingers" theatrical experience opening at Club Fugazi.

Vince Yuen presented his campaign, Refuse SF and asked THD to help in his efforts. THD asked for his banner ad and will put it on the THD website.

Jacqueline Jones shared the social and educational services that Next Village SF offers and will be sending doorhangers to THD. Volunteers are matched with those individuals needing services such as chores, transportation, and other non-medical services, which are a great resource for the neighborhood.



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THD BOARD OFFICERS 2021-2022	DIRECTORS
President: Al Fontes	Term: 2020-2022
Vice President: Romalyn Schmaltz	Don Raichle
Recording Secretary: Mary Lipian	Termeh Yeghiazarian
Corresponding Secretary: Melissa Dong Mountain	Julia Martin Murphy
Treasurer: Nick Ferris	Nadya Williams
Financial Secretary/Membership: Andy Katz	Term: 2021-2023
Historian: Nancy Shanahan	Patrice Ignacio Moll
Past President: Stan Hayes	Katie Hopkins
Semaphore Editor: Cap Caplan	Kate Butler
	Greg Giachino



WELCOMING NEW MEMBERS!

There's no better way to be connected to your neighborhood and be a voice of the hill than by joining Telegraph Hill Dwellers, today.

Join at THD.org. If you'd prefer to have a brochure and sign-up form mailed to you, please send an email to membership@thd.org. Already a member? Give one as a gift!

Membership includes:

- A one-year subscription to news & events via email and a quarterly paper, *The Semaphore*.
- Opportunities to be active in your community. Your passion likely aligns to one of many committees.
- Social and Art & Culture events throughout the year – attend and contribute!

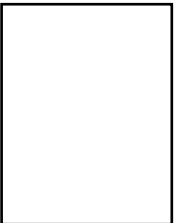
Annual Dues:

Individuals.....	\$35
Households.....	\$50
Seniors (65 and older).....	\$25
Senior Households.....	\$40

Join now or give the gift of membership at THD.org or email membership@thd.org.



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THE SEMAPHORE

#234 Summer 2021

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THE
CIRCUS
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